

Exhibit No. 6

Date 1-23-15

Bill No. SB 86

Montana should move campaign reporting into 21st century

JP Pomnichowski – Bozeman Daily Chronicle Editorial 01/23/2015

Most of us entered the 21st century 15 years ago. And it's long since time for our state political system to do the same.

A bill proposed by state Sen. JP Pomnichowski, a Bozeman Democrat, would require all those seeking seats in the Legislature, along with county candidates and political committees, to file their finance reports electronically.

The measure, Senate Bill 86, would cut down on manual work now done in the Office of Political Practices to enter paper-filed reports manually. More importantly, it would make the information available to voters instantaneously. Statewide candidates are already required to file electronically. Some 80 percent of all candidates already do so. And 36 states require all candidates to file this way.

Recent U.S. Supreme Court rulings have struck down many campaign-finance laws – including Montana's. This has opened the door to out-of-state money creeping into state politics. The only way to combat these outside influences is for voters to know who is trying to buy Montana elections. And this measure would provide that knowledge in a timely manner – soon enough for voters to know before going to the polls.

In this day and age there's no reason for not passing this measure. Even in the remotest parts of the state, Internet access is available in public libraries and local businesses where anyone can enter their finance reports easily. How state lawmakers vote on this one is worth keeping track of. Opposition to this bill can only mean one thing: a desire on the part of lawmakers to keep their campaign finances murky.

In a sparsely populated state like Montana, it doesn't take a lot of money to buy an election. And loading up the Legislature with like-minded lawmakers can serve the big-money interests in state land management and other important issues.

SB 86, along with a measure introduced in the House that would update campaign finance reporting deadlines, will be the best way to ensure these influences are minimized.